



WILDLAND FIRE SUPPRESSION ASSESSMENT

by the City of Santa Barbara

Information Fact Sheet

In May 2006, property owners in the City of Santa Barbara foothill high fire hazard areas will receive ballots by mail for a proposed Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment. If approved, this assessment would provide services to reduce the severity and damage of wildland fires in the foothill high fire hazard areas.

Please watch for your mailed ballot the first week in May of 2006!

History Of Wildland Fires In Santa Barbara

Due to factors such as topography, location, climate and infrastructure, the Santa Barbara community has a relatively high inherent risk from wildland fire. Listed below are some of the major wildland fires that have occurred in our foothill areas since 1970:

Year	Fire Name	Acres	Homes Lost
1971	Romero Canyon Fire	14,538	4
1977	Sycamore Canyon Fire	805	234
1977	Hondo Canyon Fire	10,000	0
1979	Eagle Canyon Fire	4,530	5
1990	Painted Cave Fire	4,900	524
1993	Marre Fire	43,864	0
2002	Sudden Fire	7,160	0
2004	Gaviota Fire	7,440	1

What Makes Our Community At Greater Risk From Wildland Fire?

In May of 2004 the City of Santa Barbara City Council adopted the City Wildland Fire Plan. This plan identified City areas at high risk from wildland fires. The Plan identified the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones within the high fire hazard area as having the greatest risk associated with wildland fire. There are several factors in these zones that contribute to a greater wildland fire risk than other areas of the City. Among these factors are:

■ **Climate.** The climate consists of cool, moist winters and hot, dry summers that last well into the fall months. The low humidity and high summer temperatures increase the likelihood that if a fire starts in the area it will spread rapidly and be difficult to control.

■ **Chaparral.** The Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones have a significant accumulation of chaparral and chaparral mixed with landscape vegetation. When fires burn in this type of vegetation they burn hot and spread quickly.

■ **Topography.** Periodic wind conditions known as "Sundowner" and "Santa Ana" winds interact with the steep slopes in the Santa Ynez Mountains and the ocean influence, resulting in an increase in the speed of the wind to severe levels. These two types of wind conditions increase the likelihood that fires will advance downslope towards the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones. In addition, these winds can greatly increase the rate at which a fire will spread.

■ **Road Systems.** Some of the roads in the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones do not meet Fire Department access and vegetation road clearance standards, and many are made even narrower due to encroachment of vegetation. In addition, many driveways are long and steep, posing a safety hazard. All of these factors make it more difficult and more hazardous for the Fire Department to provide fire suppression services in these areas.

What Is The Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment?

If approved, this assessment would assess all properties in the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones of the City's high fire hazard area in order to provide funding for services to reduce the severity and damage from wildland fires.



What Will The Wildland Fire Assessment Provide?

Funds from a local wildland fire suppression assessment would be spent on projects to reduce the severity and damage from wildland fires. If the assessment is approved the Fire Department will hire a full time employee dedicated to the assessment area. The list below provides an overview of some of the projects that could be funded:

Improve Evacuation Routes - Vegetation is encroaching on the roads in many areas of the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones, but the current Fire Department budget only allows for vegetation removal along 7 miles of these roads. If approved, it is estimated that the assessment district would allow the Fire Department to remove encroaching vegetation on 14 to 28 miles of these roads annually. This will reduce the wildland fire risk by creating safe evacuation routes for residents. In addition, this will increase the safety of firefighting equipment that must respond quickly to a fire.

Defensible Space Inspection and Assistance - If the assessment is approved, the Fire Department will provide inspection assistance to property owners in their efforts to create defensible space.

Availability of Chipping Assistance - If the assessment is approved, the Fire Department would provide assistance to property owners in creating defensible space by providing chipping services to dispose of vegetation removed from property.

Vegetation Management - Hazardous vegetation outside defensible space areas provides a significant threat to homes and the community due to hazardous accumulations of vegetation. This type of hazardous vegetation can increase the intensity and spread of a wildland fire. If the assessment is approved, some money will be spent on reducing the amount of hazardous vegetation through vegetation management. These areas are outlined in the City Wildland Fire Plan.

Fiscal Safeguards And Accountability Provisions

The Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment includes strong fiscal safeguards and several layers of accountability to ensure that all funds are used properly to mitigate the threat of wildland fires in the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones:

- All funds stay local: funds raised can only be spent within the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones of the City high fire hazard area
- Independent annual audits
- The City Council will oversee the use of the funds
- The budget and proposed services will be presented to the public annually at a noticed public hearing.



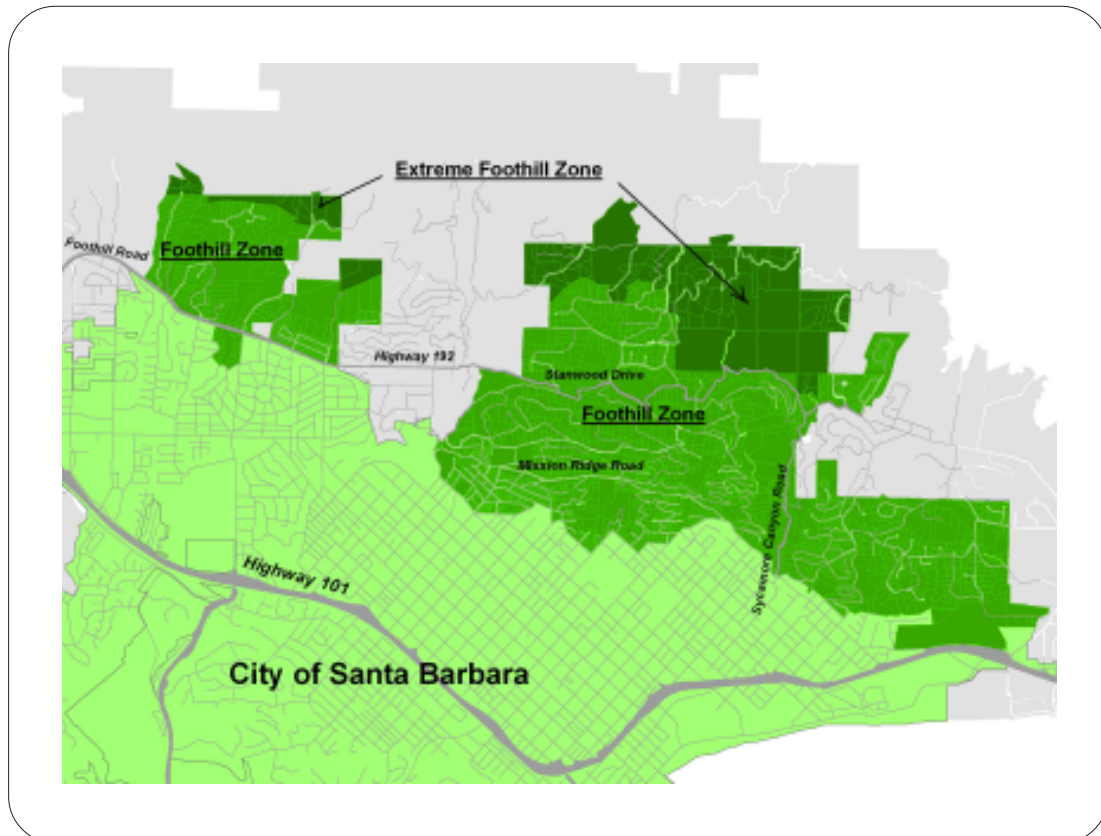
What If The Assessment Is Not Approved?

If the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment is not approved, the Fire Department will not provide the additional services stated above in the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones. As a result, properties in the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones will continue to be at greater risk from wildland fires.

How Will This Assessment Be Decided?

This measure will be decided by property owners, through a mailed ballot process established by the Right To Vote On Taxes Act of 1996 (approved by California voters as Proposition 218).

Please watch for your ballot in May 2006.



For additional information about the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment visit www.santabarbaraca.gov or call the City of Santa Barbara Fire Department at 805-564-5720.